

Best Buddies India College Programme

AFA began the Best Buddies India College Programme in collaboration with Best Buddies International in 2011.

Best Buddies International (BBI) is an organization dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment and leadership development for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD).

Founded in 1989 by Anthony Kennedy Shriver, BBI is now established in all 50 states in the US and 50 countries all over the world. BBI comprises of seven formal accredited programmes: Best Buddies Citizens, Colleges, e-Buddies, High Schools, Jobs, Middle Schools and Ambassadors. While school, college and citizen programmes aim to provide friendship opportunities, Best Buddies Jobs provides work prospects and the Ambassadors programme supports people with disabilities to become self-advocates.

Right from its inception, AFA, has emphasized upon the need to provide opportunities to individuals with autism to have interactions with their peers, which results in a 'win - win' situation; wherein the person with autism is 'included' in the true sense of the term and the non-disabled peer learns to appreciate and interact with people with different needs, leading to a more sensitised and non-judgemental personality. The similarity of this ideology led to the establishment of the collaborative initiative with BBI.

Through Best Buddies Colleges, we seek to build one-to-one friendships between non-disabled college student volunteers and persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and other disabilities. The friends commit to meeting each other regularly for one academic year through monthly group interactions and to one-on-one interactions on a weekly basis through emails/ phone calls.

Since 2011, we have had NSS volunteers from Gargi College, University of Delhi participate in the programme. In 2013 volunteers from Zakir Husain Delhi College also joined in. We welcome other colleges to collaborate with us in this endeavour.

There is no other internationally recognized program like Best Buddies, with its unique focus on *mutually enriching* one-to-one friendships. Through these individualized relationships, both the *volunteers* and *people with disabilities* grow and benefit.

For more information about the programme or if you are interested in being a part of the programme, please feel free to email us at volunteers.afa@gmail.com